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"For crying out loud"

by Will Nicholls

The new Liberal government's first budget was presented to Parliament March 22 to high expectations from First Nations across the country. Despite reservations in some quarters, it was generally well received.

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde felt it was "a significant first step," and "way better than Kelowna." The reference to the 2005 Kelowna Accord struck by the last Liberal government with Aboriginal leaders and premiers promised \$5 billion in new funding over five years. The Trudeau government has now budgeted an increase of \$8.4 billion over five years. Let's see how they match up.

The Kelowna Accord promised:

\$1.8 billion for education, to create school systems, train more Aboriginal teachers and identify children with special needs.

\$1.6 billion for housing, including \$400 million to address the need for clean water in many remote communities.

\$1.315 billion for health services.

\$170 million for relationships and accountability.

\$200 million for economic development.

The 2016 federal budget allocates confirmed spending of:

\$1.8 billion over five years to improve water quality on reserves.

\$2.6 billion over five years for primary and secondary education, including what's left from funding announced by the Conservatives in 2014.

\$635 million has been allocated to strengthen the First Nation Child and Family Services program over five years.

\$554.3 million over two years to address poor housing conditions.

\$270 million over five years for health-care infrastructure, including repair of nursing stations.

\$10.4 million over three years to renovation and construction of shelters for victims of violence.

In addition, the Liberals eliminated the 2% cap on new funding for First Nations.

So it seems that Bellegarde is right. Let's not forget history: the Kelowna Accord died after the Conservatives teamed up with the NDP to defeat the minority Liberal government led by Paul Martin. Harper won the subsequent election and immediately consigned the recent agreement to the dustbin. Many First Nations bands and organizations then suffered serious cuts to their funding. Legislation affecting First Nations across Canada was adopted without their consultation, participation or consent.

Even though the budget is a step forward considering how many steps back Canada's Aboriginal Peoples have endured over the past decade, there are still complainers.

"It's a step in the right direction – call it a down payment if you will," said NDP leader Tom Mulcair. "But the Liberals broke their promises." Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson of the Manitoba First Nations group MKO called the new funding only "a deposit on a historic reset." Cindy Blackstock, president of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, felt the government didn't step up the plate to increase funding for on-reserve child welfare services by a required minimum of \$200 million a year. "It is \$71 million in year one and then \$99 million in year two," she said.

A budget is never going to satisfy everyone, especially when there is only so much money in the pot. Remember that Justin Trudeau is only in his fourth month as prime minister. It's too early to condemn his efforts. He and his government cannot be expected to solve all of Canada's problems in that time, but I think he has made a credible start.

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Photo by
Brendan Forward

Correcting the lines of history

Hotly contested land claim suit lands in Ontario Superior Court

by Akiva Levitas

news



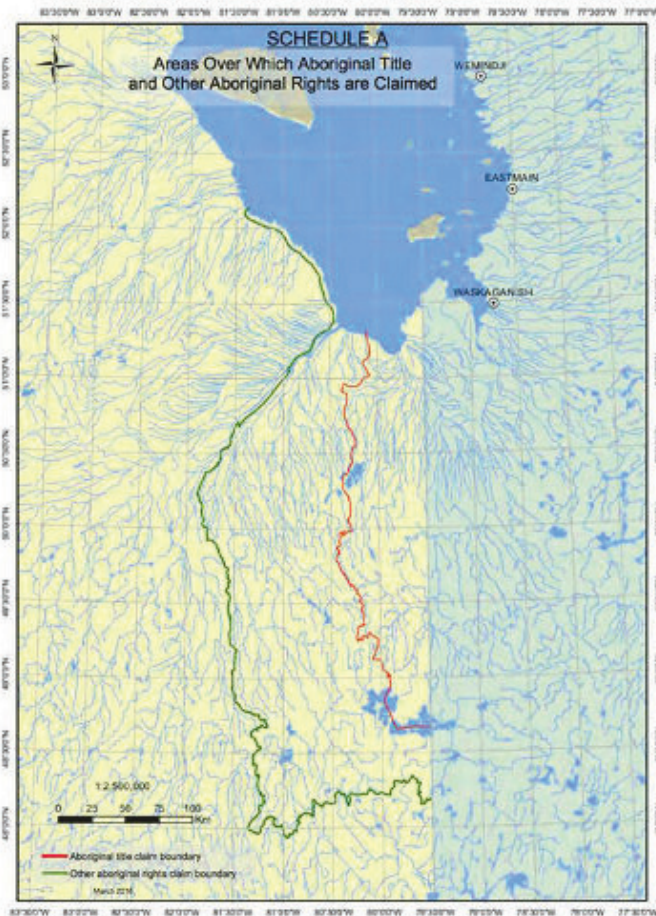
Rarely do straight lines define natural borders. But when the provinces of Quebec and Ontario were created in the 19th century, it was a simple decision to just slice through northern lands that held no meaning for the white politicians drawing the new map.

This unnatural division did not take into consideration First Nations who already occupied the territory. On March 3, the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee launched a land claim suit in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, which has set off a spirited debate between multiple First Nations in both Quebec and Ontario. The area at the heart of the lawsuit is a 48,000-square-kilometre tract of land that sits on the Ontario side of the border.

The goal of the suit is to have the titles and rights over the land on a shared basis with other Aboriginal communities as well as restitution in the form of \$495 million for the past breaches of the Cree Nation's right to these lands. The figure derives from the economic activity that has taken place in the region despite the fact that the rights to the land have never been ceded by Eeyou Istchee.

"Our people have used, occupied, governed and protected these lands in Ontario since time immemorial, but our rights in these lands have never been addressed in any treaty," said Grand Chief Mathew Coon Come as the lead representative plaintiff in the case.

Evidence for the case comes from centuries-old documents that record the historical use of the land by the ancestors of the Quebec Cree as well as expert testimonials from anthropologists who are familiar with the area. The case itself traces its roots back to 1989 when the Grand Council of the Crees launched the claim against the federal government in a case entitled Coon Come 3.



Top: Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come and Deputy Chief Rodney Mark; Bottom: Map outlining the territory in question.

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"We had an amendment also to include claims related to the Cree Nation's rights and titles in Ontario," Coon Come said of the earlier suit. However, the claims had to be put on hold as hydroelectric conflict was coming to a head. The land claim was given new life when a federal judge ruled last July that the claim had to be brought to the Ontario Superior Court for resolution.

"Why Aboriginal rights? Because our people used to hunt, fish and trap in that area," Coon Come explained. "And title? Because we have never surrendered our rights and title to the land."

The main grievance is that the government of Canada breached the Cree Nation's rights to the land during the division of Quebec and Ontario.

Following the announcement of the suit, however, neighbouring First Nations voiced opposition to the claim. Groups opposing it include the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), which represents the First Nations communities of Treaty No. 9, and the Mushkegowuk Council that represents seven NAN First Nations on the James Bay coast in Ontario.

The land claim overlaps with two Ontario First Nations in particular: the Moose Cree and the Wahgoshig First Nation. In response to the lawsuit, Moose Cree Chief Norm Hardisty Jr. said his community is "committed to doing whatever is neces-

sary to ensure the protection of our rights and our jurisdiction in our homeland."

Although the case has a long history, the lawsuit is seen as taking an unanticipated turn. The perception of Coon Come 3 was that it was primarily concerned with issues other than land rights and title.

"It is only in the last few years that, as we understand it, the Quebec Crees have decided to focus their efforts on making claims to our homeland," said Hardisty. Although there had been a meeting between the two First Nations, it was clear to Hardisty that the Cree Regional Authority had already chosen to bring the case to the Ontario courts. Both the Moose Cree and the Wahgoshig First Nations are consulting lawyers before determining their next steps.

Despite the opposition, the Cree Nation government is determined to press ahead with the case. "What I'm surprised by the leadership on the Ontario side is of how they would go against the Cree," Coon Come said. He argues that the young Canadian government created the "politics of division" with artificial divisions of Aboriginal territory – without consulting First Peoples.

The Grand Chief also stressed that the case is not about exclusive rights and title but that of a shared basis with other Aboriginal Nations. The case is, ultimately, an effort to repair a historic mistake.

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Elected as Chief



DEREK MCLEOD
Elected as Deputy-Chief




*Both candidates were successful upon the first ballot. Each term is three years.
Oath of Office ceremonies will be held in accordance with MoCreebec Eeyoud Election By-Law*

The sitting Council members of MoCreebec Eeyoud Council retain the right and authority to determine how their political leaders are voted into office based on its own Constitution Framework and Governance stated procedures (Bylaw). They can either call elections where registered members can participate in nominations then vote in an open forum; or the Council can choose to follow customary law procedures where the sitting Council nominate a candidate and then family clan reps. along with their family clan members are asked to confirm the candidate. For its first ever voting into office of Chief and Deputy Chief the MoCreebec Eeyoud Council opted, for this time around – elections.

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Broadback Final Decision Delayed

At the end of March, the government will decide the future of one of Quebec's last pristine forests.

by Orlando Blacksmith

Waswanipi residents are anxiously awaiting an overdue report that could decide the fate of the Broadback forest, the last pristine area in the southern Cree community's territory. The provincial Comité d'examen (COMEX) was expected to release its recommendations on logging applications for the area by March 3.

"The report has been delayed until the end of March," said Waswanipi Chief Marcel Happyjack. "Then not too long after we'll get a final decision for the Broadback."

COMEX, Quebec's environmental and social impact review committee, is an independent agency composed of members appointed by both the Quebec government and the Cree Nation. The agency is supposed to work as a mediator in assessing project impact of projects in the area governed by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), and to protect Aboriginal hunting, fighting and trapping rights, social and natural environments and Aboriginal communities.

"We've met with companies to discuss what can be done," said Chief Happyjack. "We've met with different groups and shared our story. COMEX has listened to a lot of our issues and is passing that knowledge along to the government."

More than 120 Crees attended a recent COMEX hearing in January, and Greenpeace and the Waswanipi Eenu have agreed that preserving the Broadback is key in the fight against climate change.

"We've had over 9,000 supporters in the fight to save the Broadback," said Nicolas Mainville, forest campaigner at Greenpeace. "We got 6,000 signatures in just two days. It's clear that the other communities and the people in them support our cause to save the forest."

About 90% of Waswanipi territory has already been negatively affected by the creation of access roads and forestry activities, which makes the Broadback such a vital region for the community.



"It has been a controversial topic in Quebec, mostly because the logging companies involved didn't want to listen to what the First Nations had to say," said Mainville. "Now that they have a voice and supporters, logging companies simply can't walk in and go to the Broadback without conflict. Opening the door for these companies would cause quite a scandal, on the international level."

He added that the longer the government waits to make a final decision, the more allies Crees and environmentalists will make in the battle to preserve an intact eco-system. "We can make a larger impact if people get involved, and people are clearly interested," Mainville emphasized, directing those interested in the issue to visit www.savethebroadback.ca

"Hopefully the decision will be based on what the people of Waswanipi want," concluded Chief Happyjack.

Images provided by Green Peace



Crees participate in panel on Native incarceration

Cree Nation Government Justice Director Donald Nicholls shared his views on the disproportionate number of Aboriginals in the Canadian prison system during a discussion on Parliament Hill March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. While First Nations represent 4% of Canada's population, they account for over 25% of those incarcerated across the country.

In his presentation Nicholls cited a 2013 report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator that found a "limited understanding and awareness within the correctional system of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, spirituality and approaches to healing."

Scarborough-Rouge Park MP Gary Anandasangaree, an internationally recognized human rights lawyer, hosted the roundtable discussion. It also heard from Elizabeth Fry Society Executive Director Kim Pate, who spoke on the rapidly increasing numbers of Aboriginal and racial minority women in Canadian prisons.

Fire damages Oujé heating plant

Oujé-Bougoumou's heating plant caught fire March 9, the third time in recent years a blaze has occurred at the facility.

Freddy Martin Bosum, of Ouje's public works department, took to Facebook to assure residents that the fire was under control and that they have partnered with the regional fire department to determine the cause of the fire.

"The chief and I would like to reassure the people of Oujé-Bougoumou that we do have the capacity to continue to provide heat and hot water to the community," said Bosum on a Facebook post to the community's announcements page. "However, we would still urge our members to have heaters on standby, just in case something happens throughout the next few cold weeks."

Various community members, the chief, deputy chief and a councillor helped fight the fire, according to Jamie Fawn Mianscum. "I hope that the fire department now know what kind of improvements are needed," she said in a Facebook post.

If anyone in Oujé has any problems related to heat or hot water, contact the district heating personnel at 418-770-6750 or the Director of Public Works at 418-770-8451.

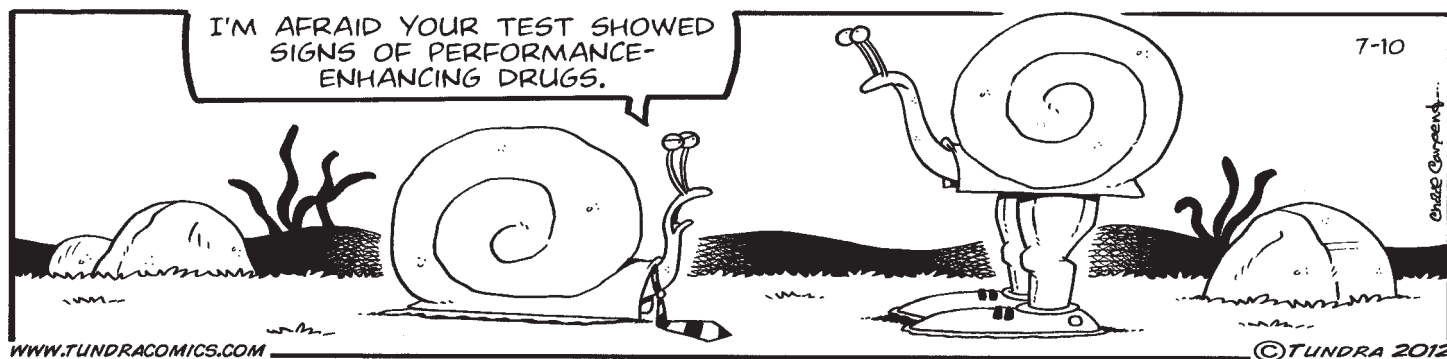


Previous Fire

Aboriginal Science Fair coming to Mistissini

This year's Quebec Aboriginal Science Fair (QASF) is taking place at the Neoweskau Sports Complex in Mistissini April 5 and 6. A collaboration between the Cree School Board and the Quebec Aboriginal Science and Engineering Association (QASEA), the theme for this year's competition is "Aboriginal Footprints: the Path to Future Innovations."

About 100 students from Grades 5 and 6 and Secondary 1 to 5 will be competing for cash prizes, trophies, and awards of excellence in communication, cultural heritage, environment, and health categories.





Healing from the land

Whapmagoostui walker heads north along Hudson Bay on a journey of grief and rebirth

by Jesse Staniforth

Photos by Saige Mukash and Julia Kumarluk



John Ckarence Kawapit (center) and his team on the path to healing

About 86 kilometres outside of Inukjuak, John Clarence Kawapit hit the distress signal. He wasn't in immediate danger, but he was close. His team of three people, walking as John's Healing Journey from Whapmagoostui to Salluit, was running out of food and fuel for their Coleman stove.

"I didn't want anybody to die from starvation," said Kawapit. "It was getting cold."

That was back in early March. When he finally talked to *the Nation*, Kawapit was much more comfortable, having just enjoyed a feast of sandwiches,

soup, ptarmigan and bannock in Puvirnituq, more than 500 kms north of Whapmagoostui. Things were looking up.

Of course, if things had been looking up all along, there'd be no need for a journey, but in December Kawapit's life was in terrible shape. A survivor of sexual assault, Kawapit had been drinking for years. He was homeless, and his fiancée had left him. That was when he decided to kill himself.

"I talked to someone in my community about what I was about to do, and he called the clinic,"



“I had a big scar in my heart,” he said, “and I couldn’t tell anybody, I couldn’t share with anyone at all. That’s the reason I started walking — to find the answers.”

Kawapit said. “The doctors sent me to the hospital in Chisasibi. That’s where I started to think about my life and what should I do. Should I end my life like that? Or not.”

He wasn’t alone in the descent. His brother Isaac Kawapit a.k.a. “The White Wizard” had died of addiction in 2013 only months after guiding and guarding the Nishiyuu Walkers from Whapmagoostui to Parliament Hill, becoming an iconic figure in the process. His elder sister, Kawapit said, has been hospitalized for alcoholism for some time.

“I don’t think she’s ever going to come out of there,” he said. “She burned her brain up from alcohol.”

That was the direction Kawapit was going as well, unwilling to face the reality of his downward spiral, drinking heavily and sleeping in shacks and on friends’ couches. In the hospital, he began to think about making this walk in order to heal himself, and over the month and a half that followed, he gradually prepared. But he was still living the same hard life that had created the need for healing.

“It was Saturday when I started walking,” said Kawapit. “That night before, Friday night, I was drunk as usual at my cousin’s place. I woke up in the morning, five o’clock. I wasn’t ready – I hadn’t packed anything. I started to think, ‘I’m just going.’ I had no choice. I needed this life, I needed this healing badly.”

He did his best to pack over four or five hours, gathering together his blankets, clothes and food donated by locals to support him on his journey. However, he didn’t even have a gun. He figured he’d work that out on the land.

Asked how he planned to eat without a gun, Kawapit laughed. “Everybody asked me that!” Sure enough, friends eventually gave him a .22 rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun. But that came later – the first thing was walking.

“When I was walking for the first few days,” he remembered, “I was really in bad shape. The alcohol was still in my system. I was so weak – I would take 20 steps, then I’d rest for a minute, and keep going. That’s how bad it was in the beginning. But after a few days I was getting better and better.”

By the time Kawapit had reached the next community north, walking was becoming easier. In the following weeks he discovered he’d lost 30 pounds and was regaining his strength.

“My body feels like it’s 20 years old!” he said.

Two people have joined him: his young friend Jimmy Tooktoo and Alice Nurlik, the fiancée who broke up with him. While the weather is thawing out in Eeyou Istchee, Kawapit said, “It’s still way too cold up here. The Inuit told me it would get colder the more I go north.”

Describing their days, Kawapit makes no attempt to sugarcoat his descriptions.

2016 Eeyou/Eenou Regional Assembly on Health and Social Services Waskaganish, April 12–14



The theme of the Assembly is:

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"Alice heard about my journey, and she wanted to follow," he said. "But during our journey – it's complicated. We're trying to find a way to deal with it, trying to get over our anger and our jealousy. We're working on it together. My buddy Jimmy is always walking behind us. I think he's giving me time to talk to Alice."

Throughout the journey, they encountered problems, big and small. The day before he talked to *the Nation*, the three had travelled a bit by dogsled.

"My fiancée had to go toilet, so she jumped off the sled while the dogs were still running," said Kawapit. "She couldn't catch up with the dogs! The helpers didn't return to us again. After two or three kilometres, I had to jump off the sled too, and I walked back. We started walking again – she was okay, but I was kind of pissed off at her, because the dogs ran away from us. Luckily after eight kilometres of walking, some hunter spotted us, and he drove us where the dogs were. That's how we made it here. Something like that happens almost every day – we have some difficulties. But we're not giving up, buddy. We're going on no matter what."

The underlying purpose of the journey is a lot more than finding a change of scenery. Kawapit underlined that from the beginning, his goal has been to deal with grief and face the pain that he endured in his younger days when he was abused.

"I had a big scar in my heart," he said. "I couldn't tell anybody, and I couldn't share with anyone. That's the reason I started walking – to find the answers, and to try to find myself, who I am, in the land. The land helps a lot. And it helps a lot that I'm starting to get closer to our Creator, to get to know him better."

Kawapit knows only too well how quickly healing can disappear if it's not protected and nurtured. He has his brother's example – and no intention of ending up the same way.

"I've worked on making my healing permanent," he said. "I've tried to focus on what should I do when I get home after this journey. I have a plan for how to keep myself occupied when I get home, and not to fall off the wagon again. I'm going to keep myself busy, go into the bush, help Elders."

Kawapit is an artist who carves "anything that's carvable" – wood, bones, soapstone and





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John's loyal companion Amaruk

rocks. Once he's back in Whapmagoostui, he wants to focus on making art. As well, he plans to look into a series of recovery programs for survivors of child sexual abuse.

"I'm not giving up myself, buddy," he said. "I'm trying to go on."

Kawapit, Tooktoo and Nurlik are no longer a trio – they've received interest from numerous people who want to join their journey. By March 19, when they reached Akulivik, John's son Anthony Kawapit was walking with them, along with Luuku Qullialuk and Aisa Sivuarapik. The plan now is to walk to Salluit and break for the season, then begin again next winter and continue all the way across Ungava Bay to the mouth of the George River. If all goes according to plan and they pick up the second half of the journey next winter, they can expect many more people.

For the time being, Kawapit and other members of the Healing Journey are moving forward, as he has been since the morning he packed his things and left Whapmagoostui 20 steps at a time. For those cheering for him all across Eeyou Istchee, his message was simple.

"Don't forget to pray for me when you pray," he said. "Okay, buddy?"



Happy Goose Break

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APRIL 29-MAY 2

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Keeping the culture alive

Waswanipi Elders pass on traditional skills to the youth

by Orlando Blacksmith

Various organizations in Waswanipi, including the Cree Trappers Association (CTA), the Cultural Department and the Waswanipi Youth Department, have asked community Elders to teach traditional practices to the Cree youth.

“The point of the event is to teach our youth how to live traditionally,” said Steven Blacksmith, Director of Natural Resources in Waswanipi. “Elders transfer their knowledge to our youth and teach them valuable lessons.”

In its second year, Waswanipi’s winter arts festival, the Jackie Gull Memorial Pipun Eetouin, is quite the success, according to Albert Ottereyes, one of six Elders teaching this year.



Traditional photos from Waswanipi



“We don’t know if it will be every year,” said Ottereyes. “But it went well last year and it’s going well this year. I’d like to see it continue.”

The festival aims to teach traditional skills to today’s youth, many of who view their smartphones and social media as more important than their culture.

“Nowadays we’re too stuck on our phones,” said youth participant Ray Cheechoo. “This is something that’s always on my mind. It’s very important to learn these skills so we don’t lose our culture.”

In his final year of high school, Cheechoo says he plans to go to college. For now, he’s content living day-by-day and learning traditional skills he otherwise wouldn’t have had the chance to learn.

“We’re happy to give the resources for the kids to learn,” said CTA coordinator Stanley Saganash. “Every year we try to pass knowledge of the Cree way of life from the Elders to the youth.”

“We need to preserve our way of life,” said Marjorie Icebound, the community re-integration officer at Waswanipi’s Justice Department. “Not many of our youth get the chance to go hunting and learn our traditional ways. It’s important Elders pass on what they know to our youth before they leave us.”

Besides the youth’s obsession with electronic devices, Icebound says the problem is further impact-



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ed because many families don't have hunting camps in the bush. "They have nowhere to stay in the bush. It's important for our Elders to pass on what they know to the new generation, so they can do the same for the next generation. It's important to preserve our culture for the future."

With 21 people registered for the teachings, and another 10 joining in the second week, it's clear that the youth are eager to learn.

The Secondary 5 students of Waswanipi searched for someone to teach them traditional skills, but were unable to find someone. Now that they're about to graduate and move on, it's important for them to get involved.

"At the moment, they are being taught moccasin and snowshoe making," said Jerry Gull, the groundskeeper for Waswanipi's Culture Department. "They are enjoying what they are learning and the Elders are happy to share what they know."

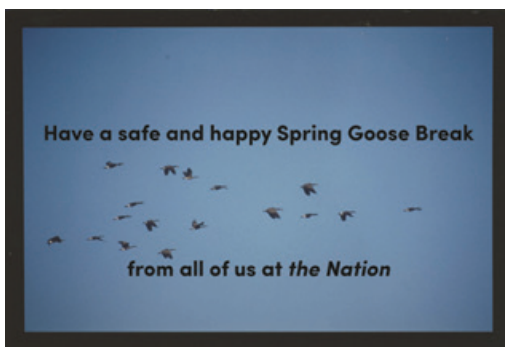
The festival takes place over a six-week period, with the youth being taught something new every two weeks. For example, in week 4, they learned about snowshoe making.

"It takes time to properly learn everything from beginning to end," said Ottereyes. "This is important because some of our youth don't know how to live traditionally. A lot of the kids from the school come here to learn. For six weeks, we teach them what we know and pass on traditional skills."

Cheechoo agrees, adding that it has helped him learn a lot of new Cree words as well as taught him how to make, maintain and repair snowshoes, something he otherwise wouldn't have learned. The youth are also taught how to trap beaver, martin and other small game.

"I don't get tired about what we're learning," said Cheechoo. "It would be great if they did this every year. When I wake up in the morning, I'm excited. I enjoy what I can do, not what I can take a photo of. I like learning, not watching."

Right: Photos provided
by Stanley Saganash



Sledding against the Clock

Despite last-minute planning, Mistissini Snowmobile Challenge draws large crowd

by Orlando Blacksmith

Photos by Brendan Forward

With 49 racers in five categories, \$15,000 in cash prizes and over 400 people in attendance, this year's Mistissini's Snowmobile Challenge was a great success. According to organizer Blazo Voyageur, however, organizing the event took place at the last minute as it wasn't until March 15 that the Mistissini band council approved its funding.

"We weren't even sure there would be a race this year," Voyageur said. "In January there was hardly any snow and it didn't come until February and March. Then the community wanted a race, so we set it up last minute."

Held March 19-20, the weekend event featured four major races – professional, sports, women and beginners – with each having a different track length.

"The racers did laps on our track instead of one big track," said Voyageur. "For safety reasons, we had to make sure the course was stable and safe."

Jonathan Matthews Neeposh, who runs the event's social media page, noted that the 50-kilometre course was adjusted to avoid crossing creeks or rivers.

Only participants who are recognized professional racers, either nationally or locally, or people who had won the sports category, could enter the six-lap professional category.

"Everyone was eligible to enter the other three categories," said Neeposh. "And it was up to the contestants to choose whether they wanted to enter the sports or the beginners categories."

The professional category had four winners: Nigel Gunner (\$5,000), Silas Neeposh (\$2,500), Yannick Gunner (\$1,250) and Alexander Briend (\$750).

The sports category had seven winners: Sebastien Neeposh (\$1,500), Kenneth Swallow (\$750), Brent Coon Come (\$500), Paul Yoshtin Matoush (\$350), Alexander Swallow (\$300), Clayton Shecapio (\$250) and Leslia Mianscum (\$200).

The beginner category had five winners: Zechariah Neeposh (\$600), Lindros Spencer (\$300), Tyrese Neeposh (\$250), Jimmy James Neeposh (\$150) and Tanner Neeposh (\$100).

Finally, the women's category had five winners: Lindsay Spencer (\$1,000), Eleanor Coonishish (\$750), Amy Diamond (\$350), Deleanna Bobbish (\$250) and Savannah Shem (\$100).

"I enjoy sports and I liked the speed of being on the sled," said Eleanor Coonishish, who placed second in the women's category. "But I was nervous because I didn't know what to expect because I haven't raced in six years."





Coonishish said she was proud of placing second, especially being the only hometown woman to make the top five. “My boyfriend joined me on the track for practice, while my family were driving by car to watch me race.”

While the race was tough, Coonishish said it was a great experience. “I was leading on the first lap until I went off-track and got stuck in the snow for a while. I’m glad one of the security guys helped me get back on the track.”

Despite its rushed organization, the event exceeded expectations. “We had fun pulling it off,” said Voyageur. “I hope the people had fun competing in it as much as we had organizing it. Next year we’ll be more prepared, for sure.”



Acting locally

The Gabriel Commanda Walk kicks off a week against racial discrimination in Val-d'Or

by Joshua Grant

This year's Gabriel Commanda Walk took on added significance as the city of Val-d'Or and the Indigenous community continue to work on improving relations following last fall's crisis of confidence in provincial police. An estimated 1000 people gathered March 21 to march through downtown carrying flags and banners to celebrate cultural difference and promote equal treatment of all races and creeds.

"Even though it was very cold we had people with warm hearts," said Edith Cloutier, director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. "It's amazing to see that year after year people come from all over, from many different communities. Mayor [Pierre Corbeil] was there as well as chiefs from the Cree and Algonquin nations."

Under the theme "Show Your Colours", the 16th annual Awareness Week for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination shined a light on issues faced by First Nations living in the Abitibi region and discussed avenues of reconciliation.

"We chose March 21 because it's the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination," Cloutier noted. "The United Nations chose that day to commemorate the end of apartheid. Not everyone is treated equally in the world and we need to be aware of that and do what we can to act locally."

The Val-d'Or campus of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue hosted a conference March 22 featuring Carole Lévesque, an anthropologist who has spent 40 years researching the way Aborigines are treated in Canada. The discussion focused on how to move towards reconciliation with the First Nations of Val-d'Or following last year's explosive allegations of abuse against officers of the local Sûreté du Québec detachment.

Cloutier said the goal of the week was to raise awareness of the way minority groups are discrimi-

Youth lead the way

A campaign to eliminate racial discrimination launched in Montreal

Story and photos by Orlando Blacksmith

The sound of drums beating kicked off Native Montreal's Aboriginal Youth Against Discrimination Campaign at Place des Arts on March 22.

Native Montreal provides services to the diversified urban Aboriginal community of Montreal. Their campaign aims to eliminate racial discrimination by informing Aboriginal youth of their rights and options dealing with the issue.

"No one is born with discriminative tendencies," said one of the organizers, Leslie Anne St. Amour. "It's learned through social interactions. No one should feel bad for looking different."

Setting up the first event was tough, according to St. Amour, who was also

one of the stars of the short movies that were presented at Place des Arts' Salon Urbain.

The campaign is backed by various organizations, such as Amnesty International, the Quebec Human Rights Commission, Montreal Youth Council and Quebec Native Women. These organizations are helping Native Montreal achieve its vision of fighting against Aboriginal youth discrimination.

"By uniting the youth we can move towards the future," said Mohawk Elder Kevin Deer, who gave the opening prayer at the event.

"In our original teachings, we were taught to respect each other," said Deer. "Not to legislate over each

other. Peace, friendship and good mind. We are brothers."

The event had two opening acts, KZO, an Aboriginal electronic dance music artist, and Barbara Diabo and her hoop dance troupe.

"The youth are the leaders of tomorrow," said Diabo, a Mohawk dancer and dance instructor from Kahnawake. "They lead us into the new direction because the old direction hurt us as a people. They steer us into the right direction to overcome discrimination of our people."





nated against, specifically in Val-d'Or and surrounding communities.

"This is a special week that creates dialogue," she said. "Under the theme of reconciliation we're looking at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and bringing it to a local level based on what we've been through as a community."

On March 23, members of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation visited the Friendship Centre to network with community workers and leaders on repairing relations between Val-d'Or and its Indigenous population.

The National Centre holds all of the statements, documents and other materials that were collected by the TRC Commission. The archives are accessible online at <http://nctr.ca/map.php>.

With so many residents of Val-d'Or and the surrounding communities of Abitibi-Témiscamingue working to ease racial tensions, there is hope for the future of the region's relations amongst all ethnicities.

Right: Traditional dancer
Raymond Papatie



Melissa Mollen Depuis, a co-founder Idle No More's Quebec branch, also attended the event as the guest of honour, sharing a few words to the crowd of about 50.

"There are extraordinary voices to be heard here tonight," she said. "We've been fighting a long time to defend the rights of Aboriginal people and looking at tonight, I think

we're one step closer to our goal of fighting youth discrimination."

Depuis shared her support with Native Montreal, stating that Aboriginal youth fighting to defend Aboriginal youth is a step in the right direction.

"I wanted to delve into the subtle world of racism and discrimination," said McGill University student Ashley Bach, who starred in the short films, helped produce them and guided the direction of the campaign. "I face it daily – even when I'm at school. Some people try to say that racism doesn't exist in 2016, but that's because they've never been discriminated against."

Bach is from the Mishkeegogamang Ojibway

First Nation in northwestern Ontario, though she was born in Vancouver. "I joined this campaign to give back to my community," she said. "Joining the campaign was super cool. The organizations were very helpful and set us up with everything we needed to get this event going. It's great for networking in the city as well as reaching out to Native youth aged 16-18."

Aboriginal youth who want to get involved in the Aboriginal Youth Against Discrimination Campaign should contact Native Montreal. "The youth can make a difference in our society," Bach said.



Will on the Grill

Call of the Wild

by Will Nicholls

Have you ever searched the Internet for goose and duck recipes and been disappointed in the results? The pictures may look mouth-watering and succulent but, in most cases, the recipes are for domestic, farm-raised geese, not for the wild goose. Wild geese have so much less fat than their enslaved... err domesticated brothers and as such they require different roasting methods.

When it comes to roasting that lean, mean wild goose, every bit of fat is needed. In fact, that lack of fat ensures the goose will cook 30% to 40% faster than a domestic bird – so take that into account.

South of the border, Ernie Mellor has devised a method for roasting wild geese that is said to yield super-moist meat that drips with flavour. He brines his geese overnight in a mixture of water, salt, pepper and brown sugar. According to Mellor, "The salt helps to moisten the meat, plus you're getting a little sweet flavour from the sugar."

But Mellor goes even further – just before roasting the bird he sears the skin in hot bacon fat to lock in juices. When he finally roasts the goose he does so over a pool of liquid that could be "anything from chicken broth to Sprite with as many herbs and spices as you like." Sounds interesting if you have the time. Oh yes, roasting time is usually two hours at 350°F. A good way to check out the doneness is to use a meat thermometer – meat should be 160°F minimum and the stuffing 165°F.



Grilled Goose Breasts

A buddy told me about this one, saying they were always a hit and proof that keeping things simple turns out well.

- Some goose breasts (your choice how many)
- Frozen concentrated orange juice thawed out
- Ground ginger

Put the orange juice in a bowl and add ginger to taste. Stir it up and drop a pinkie into the bowl to taste it. Add more ginger, if necessary. Don't forget to wash your hands before doing this as certain substances will affect the taste. Toss in the goose breasts, cover and refrigerate for 48 hours.

At the end of those two days take the breasts in your hands and toss them on the BBQ and cook on low heat. Cooking time depends on the size of your breasts.



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Wild Rice Stuffing

This is a nice simple stuffing that I have always enjoyed with goose or duck. Cut the recipe by half if doing a mallard.

4 cups cooked wild rice
2/3 cup chopped toasted hazelnuts
2 Granny Smith apples – peeled, cored and chopped
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 teaspoons ground savoury
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (1 tablespoon if dry parsley)

Cook the wild rice and then add all the other ingredients. You can salt and pepper to taste. Stuff the bird and pack well.

Okay, I've done my part here to bring you a taste of Goose Break and I'd like you to do yours. Send us your favourite goose and duck recipes and cooking tips.

Admiring friends and neighbours will envy your recipe when it is featured in a Will on the Grill Spring Goose Hunt Special. Yes, you will be credited in print and online, so send the recipes to Will's email at nation@nationnews.ca

I won't complain if you add a picture of yourself cooking or hunting. We'll probably even use it unless you are in the nude – then it goes into the president's private collection.



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Under the Eastmain-Sarcelle-Rupert Complex, a committee was created to adequately manage the ecological instream flow regime downstream of the Rupert's spillway. Made up of Cree and Hydro-Québec representatives, the Rupert River Water Management Board is responsible for making recommendations to maintain the ecological instream flow, thereby ensuring fish habitat consevation and the continuity of Cree activities on the Rupert.



Rupert's spillway



Navigation on the Rupert River



Rupert River, Waskaganish

Each month, a new video will be added to www.hydloandfriends.com. To learn more, listen to the Hydlo and Friends radio show on JBCCS. Its hosts, Luke MacLeod and Luc Duquette, discuss the environmental follow-up activities related to the Eastmain-Sarcelle-Rupert Complex, as well as the concerns of land users with regard to Hydro-Québec's facilities and activities.

Next show:
Wednesday, April 13, at 8:00 a.m.

We all need to work to ensure Cree administration of public services

by Daniel St-Amour

This letter is in response to the “Letter of Concern” from Chisasibi community member Eric House that appeared on page 40 of the December 11, 2015, issue of *The Nation*.

We would like to respond to Mr. House’s concerns, which may also be shared by many of your readers.

First of all, we extend our sincere thanks to Eric House for taking the time to write the Letter of Concern. It is obvious that he cares deeply about the Cree Health Board and the health and well being of the Cree Nation. We have put together a FAQ page on our website that contains point-by-point answers to Mr. House’s questions. You can find the link at www.cree-health.org/FAQ2015.

The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay is a Cree-governed institution. The Chair and elected Community Representatives on the Board of Directors are there to listen and bring community members’ concerns to the attention of the Board and Executive of the CBHSSJB. The Board leads funding negotiations with the province, ratifies budgets, approves policies, and charts the strategic course of the organization.

Mr. House’s letter raises challenging questions about our governance and priorities as a Cree entity. From my perspective as Interim Executive Director, and as Director of the Chisasibi Hospital for six years, our most important priority is to ensure that every one of our patients receives excellent health and social services, and is treated with respect and professionalism by qualified, dedicated, and caring people. That is their right, and it is our duty as individual employees and as an organization.

The more Cree people we can place in frontline decision-making roles, the better we will serve the people of Eeyou Istchee. Eighty percent of our employees are Cree, but the CBHSSJB continues to struggle with high rates of turnover and a shortage of qualified, certified personnel for many positions. As we saw at the Roundtable on Cree Capacity in March 2013, this is not a problem that is unique to the Cree Health Board. The bottom line is that, as the Grand Chief has said on many occasions, we need to inspire and support Cree youth to pursue their studies so that they can rise to meet the challenges of the future.

We take this opportunity to announce that the CBHSSJB is hosting a Regional General Assembly in Waskaganish April 12-14, 2016. The goal of the three-day meeting is to take stock of our progress in achieving the goals of the Strategic Regional Plan 2004-2014, and to chart the future course of the CBHSSJB, together. We would like to personally invite Mr. House to attend that meeting and help us find solutions to the issues he raised in his letter.

Sincerely,

Daniel St-Amour

Interim Executive Director, CBHSSJB

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The many faces of Eeyou Istchee

by Neil Diamond



Just like people, cities, towns and villages all have their own personalities, strengths, weaknesses and peculiar habits.

Montreal is a wild child who likes to stay up late and have lots of fun. Toronto is more serious and tedious but can once in a while be persuaded to let its hair down. He still sports a thin moustache and a mullet though; business in front, party in the back. Ottawa is the next-door neighbour who should be avoided and not spoken to in the building's elevator. Los Angeles is the poseur. The beautiful angel has the intellectual strength of Paris Hilton; which is an insult to the lovely Paris Hilton hotel in Paris, France. New York...well...New York will be New York.

There are, of course, the lesser New Yorks of the world.

Waskaganish, my place of birth, is like your middle brother who's kind of goofy, almost bright, and friendly to the point of being annoying for addressing everyone in their path as "buddy." He is also one of the most devout of the family who will attempt to "save" you even if you've already found salvation in some other higher power.

Fact. At one time, the Skag (cool nickname!) hosted a Catholic, an Anglican, a Pentecostal, a tiny Baptist congregation, a Muslim couple and another pair who worshipped one of those strange characters from somewhere in India who insist that you wear a medallion bearing their likeness and dress in silly orange robes. He's the mayor of the Cree Jerusalem, in other words.

Eastmain is the runt of the litter but talks the toughest. The small-man syndrome is expressed in a unique manner that must be heard to be believed. As an amateur psychiatrist, I call it the Napoleon Complex. On the plus side, Eastmain is possibly the most entertaining in the family and by far the best dancer.

Nemaska comes off as your overly friendly twin siblings who were separated during a turbulent time in the family's history. Their slight inferiority complex is due to being the first to be dispossessed of their original home by the Man's power projects. They now reside side by side in one of the most beautiful pads in Creedom, complete with indoor pool and bowling alley!

Waswanipi is the one brother who speaks Cree, French and English and is thus supremely confident. Again, he's another of the clan forced from his birthplace on Lake Waswanipi. Now he lives in a van by the high-

way down by the river, which I believe flows into the lake. To this day he looks yonder on clear nights and can still see the light in the water and recalls the best smoked sturgeon the world had on offer.

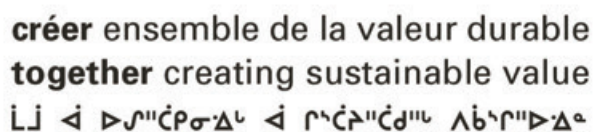
Chisasibi is the fiery, idealistic activist who's still angry over being forced to move to another crib when his basement was flooded. Back when he was still called George, however, he was the first to get hip to rock 'n' roll. A huge plus. Yuge! Anger is energy and that's where the best rock music is conceived.

Whapmagoostui is the most trusting, welcoming and generous. Also the most isolated of the ten siblings. It's also the most multi-cultural, having lived with the Inuit for generations, hosted the US Armed Forces, and now the French, English and God knows whom else. Years ago he reported a UFO sighting. Black helicopters showed up and NASA denied any involvement until this magazine proved them otherwise. Because of the gullibility factor, the others think he's a tad slow. In fact, that's the way he talks. Suh-lowwww. But his is actually the best-preserved tongue.

Mistissini is the Donald Trump of the Cree family, minus the racism. As his name suggests, he thinks of himself as the strongest, the best, scores the prettiest women and is the most sophisticated and intellectually gifted because of his size and proximity to an actual town less than an hour away. He also claims the largest body of water in the whole of the province. Likewise the most precious diamonds and the most dangerous of chemical elements. He needs to be humoured due to his power, but threatens to build a wall to keep younger brother Oujé-Bougoumou from crashing the party should he be disregarded as an excess of hot air.









Quebec prepares to roll out new history curriculum—about French and English Europeans

by Jesse Staniforth

Back in 1990, when Montreal teacher John Commins was teaching in Kuujuaq, he recalls handing out history books to his Inuit students. They thumbed through the books, looking for any representation of themselves, their communities or Inuit history – and found nothing.

Those students are today in many cases in leadership positions across the north. But Commins said, “I remember how devastating that was in terms of their own sense of self, their place in Quebec society.”

That’s why Commins – now a history teacher at Perspectives II, an English alternative high school in Montreal – was quick to read over Quebec’s new history curriculum for secondary students.

“When I got a chance to see the new curriculum, I said, ‘Where are my students?’ This new program says at the very beginning that ‘Quebec is made up of many groups.’ During the 400 years that the course [covers], there’s only one group that’s really written about – French-speaking European settlers,” he commented.

The new curriculum replaces one in use since 2006, which emphasized multiculturalism. Just before the Parti

Québécois lost power in the 2014 election, it had drafted a report on history curriculum that recommended an approach less varied in its subjects and more focused in its narrative.

One of the report’s two authors was sociologist Jacques Beauchemin, then the deputy minister for Immigration and Cultural Communities, as well as interim president for the Office québécois de la langue française.

As Beauchemin told the Canadian Press, “The current history program, in essence, tries to educate young people about multiculturalism or pluralist citizenship, saying you live in a Canada or Quebec that is diverse. [But] in the same way that teaching students a [hardline] nationalist history would be reprehensible, I think it’s not the best idea to tell them to have an extreme appreciation for multiculturalism and diversity.”

According to Commins, the changes to the curriculum reshape the way history will be taught across the province by writing Indigenous peoples out of the narrative, including them only as allies or opponents of settlers. They are no longer distinct societies with complex and



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millennia-old histories and cultures long predating European settlement. In a document that runs more than 80 pages, said Commins, mention of Indian Residential Schools is roughly a paragraph, while the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is framed as a friendly arrangement between Cree, Inuit and Naskapi peoples and the Quebec government.

"This course is historical facts in chronological order in a political framework. It would have been cutting-edge history in maybe 1963," Commins said. "I'm just stunned ... it's deeply political. It's the Parti Québécois vision of our past. I just assumed that when they lost the election, along with the Charter of Values and Bill 14, this program would just go away."

Kahnawake Survival School teacher Wayne Rice has not seen the curriculum yet – it's protected by a confidentiality agreement, and only a few copies have leaked to the media. However, Rice said he is aware of the controversy. He has been following discussion about it from the perspective of the Survival School – which was founded in 1978.

"Back then, Bill 101 was telling people that if they wanted to go to an English school, they needed to get an eligibility certificate," Rice recalled. "They were bunching [First Nations] in with people who were just immigrating to this country. The people in the community said, 'We don't think so.' We'd always talked about wanting to have our own school, but that was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Today, the Survival School teaches some subjects found in the provincial curriculum, such as math and science, but it also teaches Kanien'keha, the Mohawk language, as well as the history and culture of the Haudenosaunee/Iroquois peoples.

In general, Rice said, he feels that education has improved a bit compared to when he was young, but that was an easy improvement on Indian Affairs schools that taught legends of "The murderous Iroquois."

But Rice contends that provincial schools are still not addressing important topics of First Nations history and politics – "especially in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings of the last few years."

The Cree School Board emphasizes the importance of Eeyou history as well as modern history, such as the fight against the James Bay hydroelectric development that resulted in the JBNQA. As Chairperson of the Cree School Board,

Kathleen Wootten understands the reasons why some in the Cree communities don't feel like talking about the TRC and Indian Residential Schools. Among those who survived the schools, there are people who don't wish to revisit that traumatic history. A survivor herself, Wootten remembers the complex emotions that occurred in Mistissini when her generation was sent away, and she knows the issue can never be an easy one for Crees to discuss.

But she thinks the reasons Quebec is avoiding the topic of residential schools are very different.

"The government – most bureaucrats, even – probably feels guilty, because of the role it played in developing the residential schools first of all, developing policies that forced Aboriginal parents and communities to send their children away. And then to top it off, what we learned from Truth and Reconciliation."

Wootten referred to the traumatic stories of underfunding, neglect and malnourished children. Add to that the reality of widespread tuberculosis infections and the profoundly inhumane treatment of sick children.

"I think there's a kind of defensiveness," Wootten observed. "Maybe not guilt, but defensiveness about what the bureaucracy did, and how they handled Aboriginal affairs overall."

At the recent AFN Education Forum, Wootten noted, a major topic of discussion was proper federal funding Aboriginal schools, as well as mandating Aboriginal history be taught in all schools.

"What it boils down to," Wootten said, "is there has to be some honesty, and a lot more truth in the process than there has been in the past. And maybe much more responsibility assumed by the governments for what happened to Aboriginal people."

With John Commins's long experience in Nunavik and his recent consulting work for Kativik, he is excited for the release of the documentary *Napagunnaqullusi / So That You Can Stand*, about the Inuit history of the JBNQA.

When he showed *So That You Can Stand* to his Montreal students, he was astounded by their reaction. "The idea of a film about Inuit, for Inuit, from their perspective – they'd never seen anything like that," he said. "They were clueless."

For Commins, that's the point. When victors write the official history with a political aim, knowledge and understanding of our common past are the victims.



Making education a priority

In recent conversations with several First Nation Chiefs in northern Ontario I learned that they are dedicating a lot of time and energy to make education a priority for Native people. I understand how important education is if we want to lift our people out of poverty and open the doors to self-sustainability.

Then, when I heard the Liberal budget will increase funding by \$2.6 billion to improve primary and secondary education on reserves, I realized that all of the work that First Nations representatives here and across the country has resulted in success.

Funding levels in the past were not equal to those of non-Natives in education and when Trudeau lifted the 2% cap on funding increases for First Nations programming and services, we all realized that finally fairness had returned to federal politics in this country.

I know firsthand how difficult it was to have to leave my home community when I was 13 to attend secondary school in the south. I remember very well that nervous airplane ride to Timmins. Thankfully, I met some wonderful people who cared for me and provided guidance as I attended school there for two years.

At that point I moved on to North Bay. I was one of the lucky ones as I managed to survive this education adventure quite well. My brother Joe and I had the care and supervision of our older brother Lawrence and his wife Christine while we attended secondary school in North Bay.

But it was difficult to be away from home at that age, having to deal with a world I found very foreign and at times hostile. It was such a great thing to be able to return home to attend my last two years of secondary school at the then brand-new Vezina Secondary School in 1995.

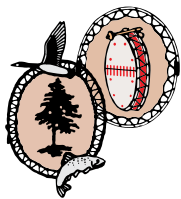
Lucky for me I had discovered some good people who were sober in my home community of Attawapiskat and there was even an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter running. I then headed south again in 1997 with a few more survival skills and I started to write. There were many people who assisted me on my journey in adapting to life in the greater world. I will forever be grateful to them.

What I realize now is that I should never have had to leave my First Nation at the age of 13 to get an education. I was just too young and many of my friends simply could not deal with all the challenges and fell through the cracks. Many people were wounded in this time. It wasn't as bad as being kidnapped and sent to residential schools like my parents and many of their generation experienced. Still, it was not easy to try to adapt to the outside world at such a young age.

These days I know that many First Nations have schools in their communities, but many still do not and their young people have to leave home to further education in southern cities. In many cases, these young people end up experimenting with drugs and alcohol and all too often tragic things happen to them. If they do not make it in the outside world they feel like failures and return to their First Nations broken, hopeless and possibly dealing with an addiction or mental problems.

That's why I am very grateful to Prime Minister Trudeau for making First Nation education a priority. I give thanks to all those First Nations leaders who have been working so hard to make this a reality. I am also thankful for the work of Charlie Angus, the NDP MP for Timmins-James Bay and the critic for Indigenous and Northern Affairs. On behalf of that next generation of bright, well-grounded, strong, proud and skilled First Nation people I say Meegwetch for helping us along the path.





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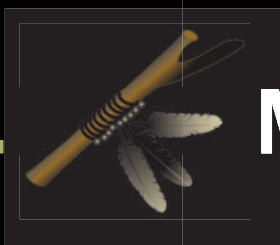
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